



Cav Soldiers celebrate Christmas in their own unique ways.

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1st Brigade Soldiers, local children, clean up trash, create park in eastern Baghdad.

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Air-crew medics provide lifesaving skills to 'Alamo' residents.

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# Cav Country



Volume 1, Issue 18

"Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year"

Dec. 25, 2004

## Lancers Help Rebuild Sadr City, Bit by Bit

By Capt. Michael Martinez  
2-5 Cav. Public Affairs

CAMP AL-AMAL, Baghdad, Iraq -- Every day since the Madhi Militia turned in their weapons in October, there have been dramatic decreases of hostile activity in Sadr City. This turn of events has allowed the Soldiers of Task Force Lancer to help re-build the city.

Day in and day out Task Force Lancer has been conducting missions such as; giving out sheep, frozen chickens and humanitarian-aid bags; protecting kerosene and propane stations and escorting sewage trucks to remove pools of sewage from the streets.

Since electricity is still a countrywide issue that is in the process of being remedied, the people of Sadr City rely heavily on kerosene and propane as their main source for heating and cooking.

"The station we were providing security for has only two hoses to refill kerosene tanks, and each person on average brings three to five tanks to be filled," said Sgt. 1st Class Reginald Butler, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry



By Capt. Michael Martinez, 2-5 Cav. Public Affairs

Staff Sgt. Chad Sandoe hands out frozen chickens during a recent visit to Sadr City. With the recent decrease in insurgent activity in Sadr City, it has been easier for Soldiers to provide humanitarian aid to the Iraqi citizens.

Regiment. "Everyday approximately 500-700 people wait in line and some wait all day and night just to refill their tanks. But overall they are happy to see us, because they know that by us being here they will get a fair price instead of paying the outrageous prices the vendors set."

While the government rate for kerosene is five Dinars per liter, some vendors were selling kerosene for as much as 300

Dinars per liter.

Another issue for Sadr City is the ever-present sewage that covers the streets. The smell of the sewage is a constant discomfort, but in some areas it is so strong that it is unbearable. Currently, there is a plan to rebuild the main sewage-line that runs through the city. However, in the mean time Task Force Lancer is providing temporary relief with sewage trunks.

"The neighborhood we are in is one of my model communities, so when I receive sewage assets I like to employ them here," said Capt. Douglas Chapman, Company B, 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment. "It shows them that we understand their problems and are trying to apply a short-term solution to a long-term problem."

Yet, the mission that has made the most immediate

impact has been the sheep, chicken and humanitarian-aid bags that were given to the Iraqi civilians. They make an immediate impact, because they are tangible items that can be readily used and bring immediate relief said Staff Sgt. Chad Sandoe, 443rd Civil Affairs Battalion.

"They are very well received," Sandoe said. "We have no problems with giving them out, because we get large crowds when we arrive. Soldiers also get into it by passing out candy, toys and school supplies they receive from donations back home to the kids. The big thing about it is that since hostilities have subsided, we are trying to give something that makes an immediate impact on the people," he continued.

The redirected efforts of Task Force Lancer are making an impact on the community even if evidence of their work is slow-coming.

"The major projects we are undertaking are not as visible and take time," Sandoe said. "It truly does make an impact, especially with the children who say such statements like 'America very good' or chant

## No Combat Jump, But ...82nd Airborne Back in Iraq

By Pfc. Mike Pryor  
82nd Abn. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD, Iraq -- When Operation Iraqi Freedom began in March 2003, the 82nd Airborne Division was there. Now, almost two years later, with a new mission, a new enemy, and new challenges to face, the 82nd is back in Iraq and ready for action.

More than 1,500 paratroopers from two battalions of the 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, the 82nd's Division-Ready Brigade, and other slice elements began deploying to Iraq from Fort Bragg, N.C. on Dec. 3, only days after receiving a deployment order. The first paratroopers arrived at Baghdad International Airport on Dec. 4.

The 82nd's mission in Iraq is to augment U.S. Army forces providing security

for the country's upcoming democratic elections. Third Battalion is attached to the 1st Cavalry Division's 3rd Brigade Combat Team. Second Battalion is attached to the 10th Mountain Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team.

Historically, the 82nd's mission has been to deploy rapidly, seize enemy territory by parachute assault, fight and win. While its current mission in Iraq is different, the division's paratroopers are up for any challenge, said Lt. Col. Thomas Hiebert, commander of 3rd Battalion, 325th AIR.

"(The Army) expects its leaders to be able to execute all sorts of missions from offensive combat operations, to stability and support, to security operations. And I don't know anybody better qualified to do that than our paratroopers," Hiebert said.

"They understand their significance in the greater scheme of things. They know darn well why they're here. And they are completely, totally, without a doubt, ready for anything," he said.

The paratroopers of 3rd Battalion, the majority of who are combat veterans, said their commander's confidence wasn't misplaced.

"All our leaders are seasoned guys and I know they're going to take care of their men. Whatever the mission is, I know we're going to get it done," said Staff Sgt. Jerome Ayers, a squad leader with 3rd Battalion's Company A. He served with the 325th during its previous year-long deployment to Iraq from February 2003 to February 2004.

This will be the first combat experience for some of the battalion's younger paratroopers. Most expressed enthusiasm at the

chance to serve.

"I feel like I'm actually doing what I'm supposed to be doing now. I'm glad to help out my country," said Pfc. Max Anduze, of Headquarters Company.

Not every paratrooper had such philosophical reasons for their excitement.

"I'm happy to be here - I need the money," said Spc. Phillip Freeman from Company B, 307th Engineer Battalion. "I hope we stay for a year so I can refill my bank account."

Whatever their reasons for coming, some 1st Cavalry Division Soldiers are just glad the 82nd's paratroopers are here now.

"We're all definitely glad to have the eighty-deuce here," said Capt. Patrick Blankenship, logistics officer with the First Team's 3rd Brigade Combat Team. "They're the All-Americans."

## How Can I Sing with Joy in a Foreign Land?

By Lt. Col. David Moran  
1st Cav. Div. Chaplain

CAMP AL-TAHREER, Baghdad, Iraq - They made me write this article-they ganged up on me. Well, at least they talked me into it-two of them. They actually gave me a deadline. "Chaplain, we need a Christmas article by Tuesday morning. Something about celebrating the holidays while away from home, family, America, deployed to Baghdad, Iraq." The pressure was too much. I caved.

And so it began, with me thinking of my obligation to write, to serve, to be among so many dedicated soldiers bravely serving nation and cause, collectively kept captive by our mission in this very foreign land. In another time, Mesopotamia would sound challenging-even inviting. This is the place to come as a tourist and connect dots on the map with stories from the Bible and antiquity. Tourists should be lining up at rental car counters and following colored lines on their maps to see sites. How cruel to visit the banks of the Tigris River, to be so close (less than 10 km) to a Ziggurat fortress dating to 1300 BC from the Kassite rulers of ancient Babylonia in the Middle Assyrian Empire, and yet so far away. And I'm just scratching the surface--Ur, Babylon, Assyria, Eden, and Nineveh, just to name a few. Yet the end result of the continued insurgency means we stay longer-Global War on Terrorism meets Global War on Terror--one cruel cycle with one war feeding another--terror banishing tourist, liberator battling terrorist.

I see the potential in Iraq. Others see it too. Occasionally we see a glimpse of the potential here, but more often it is contrast that plumbs the depth of potential not yet fulfilled. A friend just returned from Jordan. He was amazed at the modern amenities. He was amazed to leave a hotel without wearing body armor-even though he looked over his shoulder at the rooftops. He commented on the Christmas lights. He dined with a Christian host who spoke of even greater celebrations

on Christmas Day. Others who have been to Jordan agree that Iraqi tourists there could help many to see the potential of a community working together to overcome oppression, cruelty, and poverty.

I guess Iraqis are held captive too; held captive by fear and expected to sing. Fear of change. Fear of modernization. Fear of a return to totalitarianism. How can any celebrate? How can any sing?

Psalm 137 reports of another time in Babylonia where the Israelites were held captive. "By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. There on the poplars we hung our harps, for there our captors asked us for songs, our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion!' How can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a foreign land?" Far from home, family, and land--held captive, the bitterness of captivity far crueler than our limited service.

Yet in the midst of that deeper despair, the tragedy of death and destruction, our lesser sacrifices, and our family separations, I find hope. On that first Christmas there was singing; singing in the midst of captivity, families traveling to be counted in a census, a pregnant girl ready to deliver with no lodging available and forced to sleep in a stable. Angels sang. They sang to shepherds to point out the critical event that marked a new beginning; a new hope for all men. They sang, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." (Luke 2:14). On that day God interrupted the tragedy and darkness of death and introduced change, hope, redemption, and the light of life.

The good news for each of us; for all of us--is that God continues to interrupt and introduce. You are right where God can find you, to interrupt your dark times, and to bring you life, joy, hope, and a song.

Chaplain Moran is the First Cavalry Division Chaplain. He leads singing, praise and worship every Sunday at the Division Chapel, Camp Al-Tahreer, Baghdad, Iraq.

## Pegasus 6 Sends

Command Sgt. Maj. Ciotola and I want to wish every Soldier, Sailor, Airmen, Marine and civilian serving as members of Task Force Baghdad a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. We offer our warmest greetings and heartfelt thanks to all of the men and women serving in this magnificent Task Force.

This holiday season will mean different things to each of us. Throughout our nation's great history Soldiers have had to spend time away from their homes and families during the holiday season. We have sacrificed in order to defend the freedom Americans continue to enjoy and to defend the ideals and values we have come to hold in such high regard. Today every member of TF Baghdad joins the ranks of many that have sacrificed so much, American patriots who came before us; Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines separated from families during a holiday season acknowledging, through selfless actions, that some things -- larger than the individual -- are worth the sacrifice.

Please know that the effort we make here is for a noble cause. We are here to bring democracy to Iraq and improve the lives of millions of Iraqis, many who will know true freedom for the first time. The selfless service you give will be remembered for generations far beyond this deployment. Modern day Iraq is what many believe to be the cradle of civilization. The history of the Middle East is the history of our world. Your participation in this operation will forever link you to that history.

Today, the strength of our great nation is on display by the citizens of

Iraq. Every day they see first hand the most diverse army in the world working to improve their lives. Working to improve the lives of strangers, in spite of the fact we are attacked nearly every day. They have witnessed the compassion Soldiers display when insurgents attack innocent Iraqis. Iraqis who wish nothing more than to get on with a normal life, a life not unlike the lives we all know back home. Nearly every Iraqi I've met has asked me how difficult it is to be away from my family. The fact we are separated is not missed by Iraqi's who know we are sacrificing. Your actions are more important than you can imagine.

I believe our efforts will bring peace to a country that only knew tyranny through the iron fist of Saddam Hussein. While the people of Iraq may not yet have a complete understanding of the richness of democratic ideals, they yearn to breathe free. Our sacrifices are appreciated by the American people and the Iraqi people alike.

The 2004 Holiday season provides each of us the opportunity to brighten the days of our comrades around us. We find ourselves away from family and friends of our youth and everyday, but with our brothers and sisters in Arms. We know that you can find it in your hearts to make the best of the season. Take a moment today, this week, or this month and encourage those around you. A smile and positive attitude can be contagious. Christmas cheer will help us all traverse the holiday season. Spread the good word, be contagious.

God Bless you all, God Bless the people of Iraq and may God Bless the United States of America. First Team!

## Spur & The Moment

Photos by Spc. Erin Robicheaux, 256 BCT

## "How are you spending Christmas this year?"

"Sports. I love outdoor activities. Staying busy will help to keep my mind off of being away for the holidays."



Spc. Michelle Swanson  
B/134 Signal Bn

"I'm definitely going to call my family and friends on Christmas Day. We're also buying a tree and decorating it in the command post and I'll be putting lights up in my room."



Sgt. David Hammond  
D Co. 1/101 Cav.  
Attached to 1/69th

"I'll do my daily activities and try to participate in more Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) functions. I'm also going to call home, of course."



Staff Sgt. Derek Tallant  
HHC 1/156 Armor

"I'm going to call home and talk to my family and friends. Hearing familiar voices will make it seem more like the holidays."



Staff Sgt. Cody Thibodeaux  
A Co. 1088th Eng Bn

"I'm looking forward to delivering as much mail as possible. Seeing the smiles on [Soldiers'] faces is what this job is all about, especially around the holidays."



Sgt. 1st Class Elizabeth Gaines  
HHC 256 Mail Room

"I'm going on leave so I'll be home for the holidays. I'll be with my family at my sister's house and I'm going to spend time with my friends, too."



Pfc. Chris Huff  
HHC 199th FSB

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## Up-Armor; Keeping the First Team Safe

By Sgt Christina Rockhill  
1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs

CAMP AL-TAHREER, Baghdad, Iraq -- Force protection was the driving force behind the 1st Cavalry Division's efforts to provide armored layers to its fleet of vehicles. The effort began even before the division began migrating north from Kuwait into Baghdad in April. With recent questions raised in the media about the battle readiness of troops in Iraq, division leaders wanted to assure their Soldiers that they have the best the Army has to offer and continue to work the issue.

"Task Force Baghdad Soldiers are sent on combat patrol missions in an armored tracked vehicle, an M-1114 [armored humvee] or a humvee with Army-provided add-on armor," said Brig. Gen. Jeffery Hammond, assistant division commander of support for the 1st Cav. Div. "We continue to maximize every opportunity the Army provides to apply more add-on armor. We also continue to work tirelessly to add such armor to our heavy truck fleet."

Lt. Col. Larry Phelps is the chief of logistics for the 1st Cavalry Division, or as he is known in the division as "Larry Up-Armor Phelps." He arrived in January before the division and has been the driving force in making sure the Soldiers of Task Force Baghdad have the needed equipment to accomplish their mission.

"We have not missed a single opportunity the Army has afforded to apply armor to our vehicles," Phelps said. "We've far outpaced most units in the Army in our ability to apply that armor."

More than half of all the division humvees in theater are up-armored, either through Army-provided add-on armor kits or as M1114 up-armored humvees. Phelps said there are 24 new M1114 humvees on the way and as production in the Army has



By Sgt. Christina Rockhill, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

One of the new M-1114 up-armored humvees rolls off of a Heavy Equipment Transporter (HET) after arriving in Baghdad last April. The 1st Cavalry Division has armored more than 3,000 vehicles since taking over the security mission in Baghdad nearly ten months ago.

increased, so have the systems for Task Force Baghdad units.

"Humvees do not depart any of our camps for any reason unless they are up-armored," Hammond said. "However, not everything is up-armored to the degree we want, and we won't rest until all vehicles are up-armored."

Enhancing the force protection posture of Task Force Baghdad has been a work in progress.

"Every time the Army goes out to war we never start out with the perfect equipment. It has to evolve over time, and I think this is part of the evolution," Phelps said.

"We've done everything humanly possible to make this thing work, short of building an up-armored wheeled vehicle factory here," Hammond said. "Does that mean because I occupy an M-1114, I'm not going

to get hurt? Well, we know nothing in this environment is for certain. But, we have the best equipment available and that combined with good, smart tactics on the road gives you the greatest opportunity for troop force protection."

Making sure the vehicles are all up-armored isn't the only way the division is looking out for its Task Force Baghdad Soldiers. Phelps said the division has made sure its Soldiers have the proper individual equipment such as outer tactical vests with small-arms protective inserts, ballistic protective eyewear, combat earplugs and deltoid and axially protectors.

"There's nothing we won't do to protect our Soldiers," Phelps said.

Phelps also said the Soldiers' confidence in their weapons systems, training and leadership plays a large role in the safety of

the troops.

As new units are added to Task Force Baghdad it provides new challenges and opportunities to keep the Soldiers equipped and ready to fight, Hammond said.

"Since assumption of this mission, we've gained a national guard brigade, active Army brigade and two additional battalions from 82nd Airborne. In each case, we've ensured these units have the necessary track vehicle and humvee up-armored force protection capacity," Hammond said. As the two battalions from the 82nd Airborne Division arrived last week, they were equipped with 62 new M-1114s.

"We are looking for every option to make sure all Soldiers are protected and safe," Hammond said. The division has armored more than 3,000 systems since arriving in Baghdad and still has plans to armor as much as they can for the next group of Soldiers in Operation Iraqi Freedom III, Phelps said.

"We have over 100 slots in the month of December, so as that armor is provided by the Army, we will send those vehicles to the application point and appliqué armor will be applied to those vehicles," Phelps said. "We are setting conditions for those reserve units and active units to fall in our footprint and every possible piece of armor that can be hung between now and the time we redeploy is going toward the useful purpose of setting the conditions for Operation Iraqi Freedom III."

Hammond said the division will keep working to ensure the safety of its Soldiers.

"Facts speak louder than words, and the facts are in," he said. "You will not find an unarmored 1st Cavalry Division humvee operating outside a base camp on the road or on a combat mission. You can tell a 1st Cav. convoy or patrol on the road, because they are armored-up, the Soldiers are focused and serious."

## Cold Weather Safety - Stay Warm, Stay Ready

Spc. Marie Whitney  
122nd MPAD

CAMP AL TAHREER, Baghdad, Iraq -- There are different kinds of threats facing Soldiers in a combat zone. And not all of them involve combat. During the hot summer months in Iraq, heat injuries are something to look out for. But as the seasons change, so do the threats. And in this time of year, cold weather injuries have replaced the threat of those sustained in hot weather.

According to the U.S. Army Center For Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine (CHPPM), even though Iraq is not located in the extreme northern or southern hemisphere, cold weather injuries can still be a problem, especially in the cold northern mountainous regions, at nighttime with cold temperatures and in wet conditions.

"The weather here is similar to the weather we have back at Fort Hood," said Maj. Gary Aspera, division physician's assistant for the 1st Cavalry Division. "It gets chilly in the winter, but not real cold like it does in the northern United States."

This is why leaders and Soldiers alike need to keep alert to signs of cold weather injuries.

"Still Soldiers should still be conscious of the threat of cold weather injuries, especially with the wind blowing the way it does here," Aspera said.

Soldiers of all ages and ranks can suffer from cold injuries in the right situations. But some Soldiers are more susceptible to suffering from a cold weather injury than others.

Soldiers unaccustomed to colder climates and how to protect themselves from the cold are at a higher risk. Soldiers who have suffered a cold weather injury previously are also more susceptible. Use of alcohol, tobacco or medication can also make it more difficult for the Soldier to easily recognize the signs of a cold weather injury.

Improper wear of the uniform, dehydration, overworking, injury, illness and lack of sleep can also contribute to cold weather injuries.

Some cold weather injuries leaders and Soldiers should be on the lookout for are: hypothermia (severe body heat loss), frostbite (the freezing of body tissues), chilblains (skin is inflamed, but not frozen), trench foot (cold injury caused by long exposure to wet, cold temperatures) and carbon monoxide poisoning (caused by inadequate ventilation from engines or heaters).

But according to the CHPPM, just like hot weather injuries, all cold weather injuries are preventable. They note that prevention involves the proper use of clothing and equipment by Soldiers and continual

interaction by leaders with their troops.

Aspera agrees.

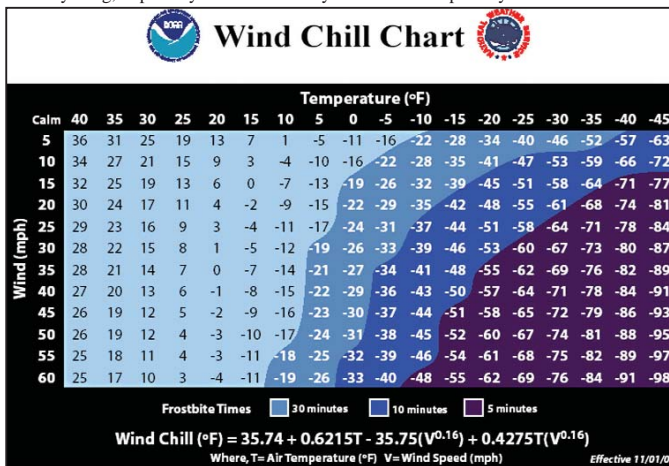
"Soldiers should be sure to use the proper equipment like poly-pros, gortex jackets and gloves to protect themselves from the cold," he said. Soldiers should also pay special attention when doing physical training in cold weather, Aspera added.

"Don't be outside wearing wet clothing for very long, especially when it's windy

outside," he said, noting the effect of wind chill on the body. (See chart.)

CHPPM also gives an acronym to use as a reminder of four key things to keep in mind for the prevention of cold weather injuries. The acronym is COLD:

- C -- wear Clean clothes;
- O -- avoid Overheating;
- L -- wear Loose clothing in layers;
- D -- keep it Dry.



## Troops Turn Trash Dump into Kids' Treasure

By Spc. Jan Critchfield  
122nd MPAD

CAMP AL WATANI, Baghdad, Iraq -- With several million dollars worth of infrastructure projects underway in Sadr City, the 1st Cavalry Division's 1st Brigade Combat Team has been moving forward to bring progress to the once conflict-torn streets of eastern Baghdad.

Although larger, more expensive projects such as sewage lift stations and electrical distribution networks will benefit the people of Baghdad in the long run, smaller, quicker projects allow multinational forces to show locals their true colors that they are in Baghdad to help the Iraqi people.

"As we do patrols in the area ... [locals] have always been good to us and helped us out as much as possible," said 1st Lt. Gerald Kubicek, a platoon leader with Company A, 20th Engineer Battalion. "So, we thought that since we use their neighborhood so much, we ought to give a little back."

On Nov. 30, Soldiers of Company A teamed up with local children and cleaned a trash-covered area in the middle of an eastern Baghdad neighborhood, converting the land into a park. Infrequent visits from the city's trash trucks and no trash bins for



By Spc. Jan Critchfield, 122nd MPAD

Children and Soldiers of Company A, 20th Engineer Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cav. Div., clean a field in eastern Baghdad during an effort to convert the field from a trash dump into a park.

locals to use resulted in what was turning into a local trash dump, threatening the health of those living nearby.

Seeing U.S. vehicles entering the area, local children ran to meet the Soldiers and

ask for candy, which Soldiers often bring for them. This time, however, the Soldiers distributed tools that the children could use to help in the cleanup.

"Kids always approach us and want

candy, but this time we had something for them to do. We wanted to encourage the local children to help themselves by using the rakes and shovels we provided to help clean up," Kubicek said. "Since there were a lot of kids out there, we gave school supplies as a token of our appreciation after the work was done."

Kubicek said getting the neighborhood energized was essential to the success of the project.

"We tried to draw the community together by getting different families to help us with this project," he said.

Since trash disposal had been the problem that made the field unusable in the first place, a trash pit was constructed so families have a centralized place for refuse.

The following day, a local contractor delivered two swing sets and other playground equipment, giving local kids a place to hang out and play football (soccer), the Iraqi national pastime.

"Now we have a nice, open park, two swing sets, and a place for them to deposit their garbage, instead of having it laying all over the place," Kubicek said. "We have a vested interest in giving something back to the Iraqi people. Projects like this one are a reminder that the American people are here to help."

## Soldier With 'Don't Quit' Attitude Excels in Iraq

By 1st Lt. Andy Blanton  
1-82 FA Public Affairs

CAMP AL WATANI, Baghdad, Iraq -- If you ask Spc. Demontiz Brooks of Bravo Battery, 1st Battalion 82nd Field Artillery (1-82 FA) what three words best describe him he will tell you "determined, outgoing and confident." After spending a short amount of time with him and talking to Soldiers in his platoon, you know that he's absolutely right.

"Brooks is my go-to man in the platoon whenever tough missions come up," Brook's platoon leader, 1st Lt. Dan Fouch said.

Fouch remembers one particular mission when the platoon searched area farms for countless hours attempting to locate bomb-making material.

"Brooks moved some hay that day," Fouch said. "He was the first one in and the last one out, like he always is."

"I credit my 'don't quit attitude' to my mother," Brooks said.

His mother, Freddie Brooks, works as a custodian at the North Sunflower County hospital and, according to Brooks, always taught him that hard work and determination could get him somewhere. While attending Drew High School in Drew, Miss., Brooks was an all-around athlete playing basketball, football, baseball and track & field. While Brooks loved playing strong safety

for the Drew Eagles, it wasn't until he joined the Army that he started heeding his mother's advice.

"The Army showed me some things that as a civilian I took for granted," he said.

Brooks enlisted in the Mississippi National Guard at age 17 and briefly served with the 116th Field Artillery before going on active duty after high school. Brooks' first assignment brought him to Fort Hood, Texas and the 1-82 FA Dragon Battalion where he has been ever since. During preparation for Operation Iraqi Freedom Brooks felt both anxious and excited.

"I wanted to see what the big talk was all about," Brooks said. "I wanted to see what I could do to make a change in the world."

However, when the 1st Cavalry Division was slated to stay behind and prepare for Operation Iraqi Freedom II, Brooks experienced a few changes.

The first of these came when Brooks' artillery unit found out it would leave its Paladin cannons behind and learn infantry tactics better suited to the situation in Iraq.

"In a way, I wanted to take the guns with me because that is what I know, but I learned to like the Humvees as well," Brooks said. "In the back of a Paladin you can't see much, but as a gunner on the Humvee you can see everything and you're the most important

piece (of the team)."

Staff Sgt. Jamie Crankfield leads Brooks' squad and praised his ability to learn new tactics.

"Once we got in country he embraced the infantry role and became a real leader among the enlisted Soldiers in the battery," Crankfield said.

The second and probably the most profound change in Brooks' life came just before deployment when his wife, Latoya, gave birth to Ta'aka Brooks, a baby girl.

"I left my daughter when she was a week old," he said. "It gave me a new perspective. I wanted to take care of business now, for her

future."

Brooks has dealt with the separation from his family by calling his wife every day, and about once a week his wife is able to go to a friend's house and communicate via web camera. He said the web camera really helps him keep up with Ta'aka.

"When I left I could almost fit her in my hand," he said. "When I get home she'll be walking."

Brooks' experiences and attitudes while serving in Eastern Baghdad have varied. He describes the first time he came under fire as scary and exciting at the same time. "The first thing

I did was check myself all over," he said. "Then I thought I can't believe they shot at me. Then I turned back around and started shooting back. I've never felt adrenaline like that."

In the same neighborhood on different day, Brooks can be seen handing out candy to crowds of children.

"I love the kids over here, I really do," he said. "Some things they ask for I can't give, but I always try to give them whatever I can get from the care packages people send us. Being over here and seeing what they have has indeed given me a new perspective."

Brooks looks forward to returning to the United States and reuniting with his family, but since he recently reenlisted to stay in the Army until 2010 Brooks has also been facing the prospects of returning to Iraq on a future deployment. He admits the separation from his family will be hard, especially since his wife, Latoya, is also in the Army and is slated to deploy soon after he returns. But, Brooks remains overly positive about his mission in Iraq.

"I expect running water in houses, electricity all of the time instead of some of the time, females being able to walk the streets and more friendliness toward Americans... A better Iraq," he said. "I'm glad I could be a part of it."



By 1st Lt. Andy Blanton, 1-82 FA Public Affairs

Spc. Demontiz Brooks, Bravo Battery, 1st Battalion 82nd Field Artillery, 1st Cavalry Division, hands out treats to Iraqi children while on a mission.



# Black Jack

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## Engineers Wade Through Gazaliya Sewer Project

By Sgt. Dan Purcell  
122nd MPAD

CAMP AL-TAHREER, Baghdad, Iraq  
-- Skirting roads that sit ankle deep in water, frustrated pedestrians, the residents of Gazaliya Township have found a new ally in their efforts to clean up their streets.

The 1st Cavalry Division's 91st Engineer Battalion, has stepped in at the request of the local Neighborhood Advisory Council to help fix the problem in Gazaliya, a community of about 250,000 people, who have had a lot of problems with their sewage system lately.

According to Lt. Col. Chris Martin, the battalion's commander, the first step in the project is the repair of two local pump stations that push raw sewage to a water treatment plant.

"Right now a lot of the sewage is going out into the streets. The project is going a little bit slower than we anticipated because we are working concurrent projects in the area so that the sewage will flow more easily," Martin explained. "Unfortunately, we have, also, had some security issues in this area but I expect we will see some improvement soon."

In addition to getting the pump stations on line, sewer line cleaning is an annual event for the residents of Gazaliya.

"There's not [much] elevation here so the sewage doesn't flow by itself. There's a lot of trash and they don't have a good storm drain system, so the trash goes in and clogs up the sewer lines," Martin said. "This year, however, the Iraqi government was unable to [fund the project], so we are taking over that for them and hopefully next year they will be able to continue."

Other issues compounding the sewer



By Sgt. Dan Purcell, 122nd MPAD

Soldiers from the 1st Cavalry Division's 91st Engineer Battalion work their way through some of the flooded streets of Gazaliya during an on-site inspection of the existing sewer problems and the current repairs being made.

problems include collapsed sewer lines and the erosion of flooded roadways.

"Part of the problem we have here is that underneath the roads we have sewer lines that have collapsed over time because the construction standards here are no where close to what we expect in the United States," Martin added. "But the real problem is not so much with the pipes but

the bedding and the soil around them. If you compact the soil properly you solve the problem of collapsing pipes, and we have a very good contractor working on fixing the problem."

Speaking in agreement with Martin, a local Iraqi contractor expressed his concerns.

"We are working hard to fix the sys-

tem because, when the sewers back up, the water that floods the streets is not only a health problem but it also erodes the existing asphalt sub-base and creates a bigger problem later," the contractor said, wishing to remain anonymous for security reasons.

Repairing the sewer system in Gazaliya is only part of an on-going larger effort to restore critical services to the residents in this middle class neighborhood that has been victimized by insurgent attacks on multinational forces patrolling the area.

"This is probably the largest project we have undertaken since we've been here," Martin said. "We've had quite a number of projects, like school renovations and garbage removal, throughout the neighborhoods in our area of operation so we have spent quite a bit of money all over."

To date, almost \$1 million have been spent in repairing the sewer systems around Gazaliya, and the money also helps to stimulate the local economy.

"One of the stipulations in all our projects is that 90% of all unskilled labor must be hired from the local area because we try to give jobs to as many people as we can," Martin added.

"Repairing the pump stations is a quick fix to a long term solution...it's just a matter of getting these things finished," Martin added. "The people are frustrated, they see people working but they don't see the progress that is being made, so it's important that we get this done. It gives the local government credibility."

## Elbow Grease Keeps Black Jack Running

Soldiers and mechanics with the 15th Forward Support Battalion and the 91st Engineer Battalion, of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, swap parts between two of the 91st Eng.'s Bradley Armored Fighting Vehicles while working on repairs at the Camp Striker motor-pool Dec. 12.



By Spc. Erik LeDrew, 122nd MPAD



## Iraqi Police Train on AK-47s, Police Procedures

By Staff Sgt. Susan German  
122nd MPAD

CAMP AL-ISTIQLAL, Baghdad, Iraq -- Building confidence in their skills and helping them feel safer as they patrol the streets of Baghdad is an important contribution toward an eventual transfer of authority and returning Iraq to its rightful caretakers.

Part of that confidence already exists, the remainder can be strengthened through training and the reinforcement of tactical as well as technical skills.

Civil Affairs teams supporting the 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment and 1st Battalion, 9th Cavalry Regiment, of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, conducted basic weapons training and a live-fire range for 26 Iraqi Police officers from the Al Karkh Patrol Sector, at Camp Independence Dec. 1.

While conducting joint operations, the CA teams helped identify the need for weapons training during neighborhood assessments. They were told by the commander that members of the Iraqi Police in their sector were uncomfortable with their weapons, said Maj. Jim Joos, commander Company B, 443rd Civil Affairs Battalion, based in Rhode Island.

"This is a very good civil affairs mission since there are a lot of cops within the CA ranks, and cops know how to handle weapons," Joos, a police officer



Photos by Staff Sgt. Susan German, 122nd MPAD

An Iraqi police officer aims an AK-47 rifle during practice at the range at Camp Independence.

from Philadelphia said. "This puts them in a very good position to help train the Iraqi police."

For two hours, Sgt. Les Coash, from St. Louis, an assistant team leader for a tactical psychological operations (PSYOP) team from the 307th PSYOP Company, 10th PSYOP Battalion, instructed the IPs on fundamental marksmanship skills in a classroom setting. He demonstrated each position as he explained it, using an AK-47 rifle and Glock pistol, the weapons the IPs are most familiar with. As a former Marine, Coash trained more than 2,000 Marines and Sailors, as well as provided refresher training to special operations forces.

Some terms, such as "stock

weld" just didn't translate and brought looks of confusion from the IPs. Humor was also lost in translation and didn't bring the expected response, although a remark about the volatile Haifa Street did elicit nervous laughter from the Iraqis.

Another purpose for the training was to improve the IPs' shooting accuracy. While out on operations, Coash and his colleagues noticed that at times Iraqi Police and National Guard were firing without direction, shooting entire magazines of ammunition at the side of a building with no actual targets.

"That puts our guys at risk, because we've been in those buildings, and all of a sudden we're get-

ting shot at," Coash said. "So we started to work this in to get them trained to try and get away from that to where they can operate safely and accurately."

At the end of the day, Coash wanted them to be more confident. Placing the focus on hitting what they aimed for, he advised them that the goal is one shot, one kill.

"One well-aimed shot is better than 30 un-aimed shots," Coash told Iraqi police.

Moving out to the range, the IPs split into two groups; with one group firing while the second group participated in police training. Those on the range were advised to adjust some other shooting factors, such as their breathing, trigger squeeze and muscle relax-

ation, based on where their rounds were hitting the target.

Through some basic verbal instruction, body language and interpreters, American Soldiers and Iraqi police practiced their communications and marksmanship skills on the rifle range.

Patience was required by all as instructions from the tower were relayed through interpreters who in turn passed them on to the IPs.

Safety was the main emphasis throughout the day. Examples of unsafe acts were explained to the IPs. They were warned that involvement in any such acts would result in them being removed from the range.

"The range was good, they gave us a lot of information that we didn't know before," said Ibrahim Hussein, who has been on the police force for two weeks since returning from training.

Police-procedures training was conducted for the group that wasn't firing by Sgt. Dan MacDonald, CAT A-2 Team, 3-8 Cav., a police captain with the Philadelphia Police Department. MacDonald spearheaded the concurrent police training, according to 1st Lt. Ralph Rafaelian, the team leader of the CAT A-2 Team, 3-8 Cav. Instruction included proper procedures for stopping a vehicle, arresting a person, cuffing a person, weapons retention and using a nightstick or baton.

CA Soldiers demonstrated the most effective way to perform each task while maintaining officer safety at all times.

"We're hoping to continue this over the course of the time we're here, for the whole time we're here and expand on it a little bit," MacDonald said. "With practice they'll get better and better."

Before leaving the range, Coash gathered the IPs and commended them on their performance during the day. He also advised them that they had one last task before they were allowed to leave the range, policing up the brass.

"It was a long day at the range, but we trained to standard, not to time," Rafaelian said. "We did courses of fire, in the 'crawl' stage and hopefully, we'll be doing this again real soon, with either new people or continue with these people here, and maybe go to the 'walk' stage and eventually the 'run' stage."

Practice makes perfect and builds confidence. An increased level of awareness and confidence could just help keep this group of Iraqi police safer on the streets of Baghdad.



(Above) Cpl. Keith Strong, a civil affairs specialist with the CAT A-2 Team, 3-8 Cav., demonstrates how to detain "suspect" Cpl. Anthony Kierys, a civil affairs specialist with the CAT A-1 Team, 1-9 Cav., as Sgt. Dan MacDonald, team sergeant for the CAT A-2 Team, 3-8 Cav., explains their actions to Iraqi police.



(Above) Spc. Brendan Piper, a civil affairs specialist with Company B, 443rd Civil Affairs Battalion, explains the proper trigger-squeeze technique to an Iraqi patrolman during training.



(Right) Sgt. Dan MacDonald, team sergeant for the CAT A-2 Team of the 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, instructs an Iraqi police patrolman on the best way to keep his weapon from being taken from him during training.



# Warriors

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## Air Traffic Controllers Guard Airspace

By Cpl. Benjamin Cossel  
122nd MPAD

CAMP TAJI, Iraq -- Watching from their lofty vantage point, they know all that happens on their airfield and in their airspace. Like a conductor guiding an orchestra through a complex movement, they maneuver aircraft on the airfield, "stacking" them within specific guidelines. When the birds take to the air, these Soldiers warn them of dangers ahead, of obstacles in the airspace.

Soldiers of the Massachusetts National Guard's Company E, 126th Aviation Regiment attached to the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division keep flight operations running smoothly from within the Air Traffic Control (ATC) Tower, known as "Taji Tower."

"We are the eyes and ears of the Taji airfields and the airspace within 10 miles of us," said San Antonio, Texas resident Sgt. Matt Schuldt, E Co., 126th Avn. Reg.

Schuldt is one of the fourteen Soldiers who works as an Air Traffic Controller Specialist, military occupational specialty (MOS) 15Q, with the company. When the unit was activated in December of 2003 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom II, they were short personal, thus citizen-soldiers from Tenn., Texas, NC, Penn., and Ind. were brought in to fill the roles of the Mass. based unit.

"It's been interesting seeing all the Soldiers from different states really come together," said Manchester, Conn. resident Sgt. 1st Class Ed Comstock, ATC chief, E Co., 126th Avn. Reg. "Over the course of the year, they've really come together as a team."

Comstock went on to note that Soldiers brought in from different units also increased an already wide experience range.

"Some of the guys we got in were fresh out of AIT (Advanced Individual Training)," he said "while others have



By Cpl. Benjamin Cossel, 122nd MPAD

Soldiers of the Massachusetts based Company E, 126th Aviation Regiment attached to the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division look out of Taji Tower monitoring aircraft.

been doing this kind of work for over 17 years.

It's really brought an incredible dynamic to this group and our younger guys have been able to learn so much."

The combined experience level has paid dividends in the fast paced, high stress conditions working in a combat zone demands.

"A typical day for us sees about 800-900 movements," explained Spc. Daren Reno of Indianapolis, Ind. "AIT couldn't possibly prepare you for all that happens out here."

At 21, Reno is one of the younger Soldiers in the unit; assigned to Company G, 238th Aviation Regiment of the Indiana National Guard. He returned to his home unit only to be immediately attached to E Co.

"The environment in school was so sterile," Reno explained. "They give you a problem and you have to provide the text book answer. Out here, there is no cookie cutter answer; you have to use

your best judgment per each situation."

Over the course of their year deployment, the Soldiers of the tower have learned to trust their experience. Their job in the tower requires they juggle many tasks, often needing snap judgments.

"From take off to landing, we are responsible for everything in our airspace and there are a lot of things you've got to be aware of," said Schuldt as he updated the Flight Data Positioning System (FDPS).

The FDPS is a system used by the Soldiers to record critical information concerning flights. Take off, altitude, radio contacts and other flight data is tracked, allowing the Soldiers to know with a quick look up what aircraft is where. The information allows the crews to properly advise pilots when they are coming into occupied airspace and it serves as the critical information tool should there be an accident. According to

Schuldt, with such a critical job, more than one information source is used in tracking movements.

"Along with the FDPS, we also use a flight strip. On the flight strip are the names of the aircraft currently in the air. When they land, we remove them, when they go up, we add them. This way we can glance at the flight strip and know what's up there."

Keeping pace with the operational tempo of flights, the Soldiers of the ATC run 24 hours a day, divided into three shifts. As Reno explained, each shift presents a unique set of challenges.

"The day shifts are just slammed with the sheer volume of movements they handle," he said. "And the nights...things slow down a little bit but you have the challenge of going tactical."

Parking, or stacking as it's referred to, aircraft during day-time operations can be a difficult task under the best of circumstances with each aircraft having its own set of rules for the spacing between aircraft allowed. When the sunlight of the day gives way to the darkness of night, the crews must go tactical, turning off all lights within the tower.

"So at night we have to use NVG's (night vision goggles)," Reno commented. "With the distortion of depth perception that comes with using NVG's, it can be a real challenge making sure everything is put away right, within the letter of the rules. That's one of those situations where there isn't a cookie cutter answer, you just have to trust your knowledge and experience."

As he watched over the transfer of day crew to night, Comstock noted that the year in Iraq has proved an eye opener for his Soldiers but that they have responded to the challenges and proven themselves more than capable.

"I'm really proud of all of my guys and how far they've come over the course of this deployment," he said. "I can home at night, knowing they are on the job, I can go to sleep and not be sitting in my room pulling my hair out from worry."

## Room Dedication Honors Fallen Pilots

By Cpl. Benjamin Cossel  
122nd MPAD

CAMP TAJI, Iraq -- Warriors of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division came together Nov. 15 to dedicate two rooms of Dining Facility One in honor of Warrant Officer Chuck Fortenberry and Warrant Officer Shane Colton, both killed April 11, when their Apache Longbow Helicopter was struck by a surface-to-air missile.

Addressing the assembled troopers, Lt. Col. Ronald Lewis, commander of the 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, said "Chuck and Shane's heroics in early April set the stage for how this Task Force would fight.

Courage under fire; be there when your ground brothers need you; get there quickly so you can save lives."

The month of April saw some of the most intense fighting in Iraq since the end of major combat operations. The number of those who paid the ultimate sacrifice in that month reached the highest numbers seen; it still remains the deadliest month in Iraq. Units of the 1st Cav. Div. were just beginning their rotation in Iraq during the month when radical Shia cleric Muqtada Al-Sadr lead his devotees in revolt, it was that ambush that took the lives of Fortenberry and Colton.

"Chuck and Shane responded to a call on the Sheriff net that a fuel convoy was under

attack, being overrun and had several wounded that needed to be evacuated on [a main highway] just west of Baghdad International Airport," said Lewis, his voice breaking as struggled to regain his composure. "Within minutes, they maneuvered to the site, began engaging the enemy attacking the convoy and enabled the ground troopers to break contact. While fighting, Chuck and Shane's aircraft was struck by a surface-to-air missile that had devastating effects on the engine and rotor blade."

For Spc. Andrew Bozylinski, a crew chief with Company C, 1-227 AV, and for all the troopers, the ceremony was more than dedicating rooms

**See Dedicate, page 15.**



By Cpl. Benjamin Cossel, 122nd MPAD

Lt. Col. Ronald Lewis, commander, 1st Battalion 227th Aviation Regiment, Task Force Attack, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division cuts the ceremonial yellow ribbon officially opening the Fortenberry Room. Two rooms were dedicated to the memory of Warrant Officer Chuck Fortenberry and Warrant Officer Shane Colton, both killed April 11, when their Apache Longbow Helicopter was struck by a surface-to air-missile Dec. 15.

# 1st Cavalry Division Troops Celebrate



By Pfc. Matthew McLaughlin, 10th Mtn. Div. Public Affairs

1st Sgt. Jeffrey East, 2nd Battalion, 15th Field Artillery Regiment (center) and 1st Sgt. Elmo Leichenauer, 58th Combat Engineer Company (to East's left), lead other first sergeants from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team (Commandos), 10th Mountain Division, in singing Christmas Carols Dec. 9. The first sergeants were attending a 1st Cavalry Division Band concert at the Morale, Welfare and Recreation Center on Camp Al Tahreer in Baghdad.

## Commandos Celebrate Christmas with Carols

By Pfc. Matthew McLaughlin  
10th Mountain Division Public Affairs

CAMP AL TAHREER, Baghdad, Iraq -- The sounds of helicopters overhead were drowned out with Christmas cheer when Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team (Commandos), 10th Mountain Division, were serenaded with Christmas sounds from the 1st Cavalry Division Band Dec. 9.

The band played a variety of Christmas songs, ranging from classic tunes like "Frosty the Snowman," to classics with a twist by musicians like Jack Johnson and No Doubt. The creativity and effort did not go unnoticed, said Spec. Allison Wallace, a flutist with the band.

"This is the best crowd we've had all year," she said.

Col. Mark Milley, 2nd BCT commander, thanked the band for their performance and presented them a plaque in appreciation, as well as a 10th Mountain Div. coin to each band member. He said their music provides solace for war-weary Soldiers.

"Christmas is a special time for everyone," he said. "Whether it's your first deployment or your 10th deployment, it never gets easier being away from your family. Things like the 1st Cav. Div. Band makes things easier for us."

The audience voiced their opinion with rousing applause. Some Soldiers from the

58th Combat Engineer Company, a unit from Fort Irwin, Calif., attached to 2nd BCT, went the extra mile to show their appreciation, giving the band standing ovations after numerous songs.

"It isn't everyday that people come out to play music for us," said Sgt. Martin Hernandez, 58th Engineers. "They took the time to entertain us; we wanted to let them know we appreciate it. They're No Doubt song ruled!"

The band provided a memorable night, but the most unforgettable songs came not from the band but rather 2nd BCT company commanders and first sergeants.

Milley "suggested" a friendly caroling competition between the two, with hilarious results. The rowdy audience declared the first sergeants winners with their off-tune rendition of "Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer." Their reward was an encore presentation, this time playing "Frosty the Snowman," with the support of 2nd BCT sergeants major.

"We couldn't compete with the 1st Cav. Band, but I think the Soldiers got a kick out of it," said Command Sgt. Maj. Anthony Mahoney, 2nd BCT command sergeant major. "We won't be auditioning for chorus any time soon."

The band said they appreciated the applause and take great pleasure in performing for Soldiers all over Iraq and will continue to bring Christmas cheer until Santa retires to the North Pole.



By Staff Sgt. St

Sgts. 1st Class Valerie Taylor (left), Headquarters Company, 4th Brig Tawana Encalade (center), Headquarters Company, 3rd BCT, and 1st Class Valerie Taylor (right), Headquarters Company, Division Support Command (DISCOM), from who are all a part of the 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div., admire their tree-decorations as they gather around the Christmas tree in their living quarters.



By Cpl. Benjamin Cossel, 122nd MPAD

(Left) Maj. Michael Spraggins, a Fire Support Officer with the 39th Brigade Combat Team shows off his newly acquired Christmas hat and shorts.

(Right) Sgt. Scott Matthews (right), the assistant supply sergeant, with Spc. Roland ROLLINGER (center) and Spc. Codey Rose, both supply clerks, pose next to a captured enemy artillery piece the 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment Soldiers decorated for the Christmas season. The artillery piece on Camp Striker in front of the 3-82 Battalion headquarters is of unknown manufacturer or nomenclature.



# Celebrate Christmas '04 in Baghdad



Jan German, 122nd MPAD  
1st Brigade Combat Team,  
Errica Washington,  
Leesburg, Ala.,  
decorating handiwork



By Spc. Jan Critchfield, 122nd MPAD

Soldiers of the 20th Engineer Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division pose in front of the battalion's motor pool Christmas tree, built from scrap metal and cement blocks, after a tree-lighting ceremony at Forward Operating Base Patriot in eastern Baghdad Dec. 8. Leaders from the 20th Engineers delivered unscripted speeches to the troops present and a dedicational prayer for the tree was given emphasizing the brotherhood of Soldiers during the holidays, serving so far from home.



By Cpl. Benjamin Cossel, 122nd MPAD

Maj. Brenda McCaslin of the 39th BCT decorates Christmas trees to place around the office.



By Cpl. Benjamin Critchfield, 122nd MPAD

Sgt. Maj. Della St. Louis, of Ludington, Mich., with Headquarters Company, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, shows members of the Iraqi National Guard how to decorate a Christmas tree.

## "The Soldiers' Night Before Christmas"

T'was the night before Christmas,  
He lived all alone,  
In a one-bedroom house  
Made of plaster and stone.

I had come down the chimney,  
With presents to give.  
And to see just who,  
In this house did live.

I looked all about .  
A strange sight I did see.  
No tinsel, no presents,  
Not even a tree.

No stocking by the mantle,  
Just boots filled with sand.  
On the wall hung pictures  
Of far distant lands.

With medals and badges,  
Awards of all kind,  
A sober thought  
Came through my mind.

For this house was different,  
It was dark and dreary,  
I found the home of a Soldier,  
Once I could see clearly.

The soldier lay sleeping,  
Silent, alone,  
Curled up on the floor  
In this one bedroom home.

The face was so gentle,  
The room in such disorder,  
Not how I pictured  
A United States Soldier.

Was this the hero  
Of whom I'd just read?  
Curled up on a poncho,  
The floor for a bed?

I realized the families  
That I saw this night,  
Owed their lives to these Soldiers  
Who were willing to fight.

Soon 'round the world,  
The children would play,  
And grownups would celebrate  
A bright Christmas Day.

They all enjoyed freedom  
Each month of the year,  
Because of the Soldiers,  
Like the one lying here.

I couldn't help wonder  
How many lay alone,  
On a cold Christmas Eve  
In a land far from home.

The very thought  
Brought a tear to my eye,  
I dropped to my knees  
And started to cry.

The Soldier awakened  
And I heard a rough voice,  
"Santa don't cry,  
This life is my choice."

The Solider rolled over  
And drifted to sleep.  
I couldn't control it,  
I continued to weep.

I kept watch for hours,  
So silent and still.  
And we both shivered  
From the cold nights chill.

I didn't want to leave  
On that cold, dark, night,  
This guardian of honor  
So willing to fight.

The Solider rolled over,  
With a voice soft and pure,  
Whispered, "Carry on Santa,  
It's Christmas Day, All is secure."

One look at my watch,  
And I knew he was right.  
"Merry Christmas my friend,  
And to all a good night."



By Spc. Andy Miller, 122nd MPAD

# Red Team

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## Pennsylvania Engineers' Final Project Benefits Rural Southern Baghdad Area

By Cpl. Bill Putnam  
122nd MPAD

CAMP AL-SAGR, Baghdad, Iraq -- Engineers working with the 1st Cavalry Division's 5th Brigade Combat Team have begun working on a road through the city's farming areas that will cut a patrol's commute time down to almost 10 minutes.

The road building project, dubbed "Operation Hardball," started about a week ago, said Capt. Pat Marsh, an engineer project planning officer with the 5th Brigade Combat Team.

The new road, running through 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment's area of operations, runs east-to-west from the Tigris River to Highway 8, a distance of almost seven kilometers.

Before the road was started, a patrol from 1-8 Cavalry's Dog Company had to take either one of two routes to reach River Road that added minutes to their reaction time to rocket attacks or Improvised Explosive Device explosions.

"This road will do a lot of good down here," said Marsh. "Now it will take about 11 minutes to get to River Road instead of almost 30 minutes."

The purpose of the road is really twofold, said 1st Lt. Matthew R. Henderson, a platoon leader in Company B, 458th Engineers. First, he said it helps the patrols from Dog Company, 1-8 Cavalry move around their patrol areas. Second, it'll help the locals move around.



By Cpl. Bill Putnam, 122nd MPAD

An engineer uses an excavator to bury a drainage pipe during the road building near a farm house Dec. 9.

The road, built by engineers from the 458th Engineer Battalion, will be about 30 feet wide and made up of gravel provided by a local contractor, Marsh said. Around him a road grader and bulldozer leveled a section of the road where it made a sharp S-curve around a canal.

It took almost three hours on the morning of Dec. 9, but the grader and dozer leveled the road, straightened it and knocked down a few palm trees to make the road

easier to drive.

Part of one mud-brick home lived in by a couple of farmers and their families ran into the road. Marsh and the engineer platoon from the 458th Engineer's Company B supplied building material for a new house.

One of the more alarming things for Marsh about the house was the roof. It was simply canvas tarps held down by bricks and rocks. Part of the supplies Marsh

brought in was tin to build a proper roof.

"Even though we had to bring a road in here - which will help them too - we had to help them," Marsh said.

The males in the family were also compensated \$100 for losing part of their front yard and a small mud storage hut.

"A \$100 will go a long ways here," Marsh said.

The original intent was to build the farmers a new barn with the materials, Marsh said. But then they took a look around and realized something.

"They were going to have a better barn than a house," Marsh said.

"Is this building ready? Because I'm going to tear it down today," Marsh asked one of the farmers through a translator.

As it turned out, the hut wasn't torn down that day. It was torn down the next.

"We can help them even more in the process of engaging the people," Marsh said.

Henderson's platoon provided security for the guys from the 458th Engineers Company C were doing all the construction work.

The road-building project is also the last mission for the Reserve engineers before they head home to Pennsylvania and demobilize, Henderson.

Out of all the places he's been around the Baghdad area, Henderson said this mission ranks as one of the best.

"It's helping the Soldiers [and] it's helping the locals," he said.

## ING Finds Munitions, Kidnappers

By Cpl. Bill Putnam  
122nd PAD

CAMP AL-SAGR, Baghdad, Iraq -- Soldiers from the 304th Iraqi National Guard Battalion found several weapons and two potential improvised explosive devices during Operation Lion's Pride II on Dec. 11.

The Iraqi Soldiers even stopped the kidnapping of an Iraqi police officer's son, said Capt. Dan Gelderman, the 5th Brigade Combat Team's senior adviser to the 304th ING.

These battalion-sized operations aren't anything new for the unit, said Capt. Mike Cole, the adviser team leader for Company A, 304th ING. They unit has run about 10 since June, he said.

The overall search was conducted and led by ING Soldiers. Company A, 304th ING Battalion, sealed off the area for elements for the 304th's Headquarters and Delta Companies to search. Previous searches through the area were fruitful. Units have found rockets, mortar tubes and arms caches, Cole said.

"So there was the possibility of them finding at least something because it is such a large area," Cole said.

Most of the search area was made up of farm fields and date palm groves. But overall the search went quickly.

By 11 a.m., the search had turned up what the ING told Cole were two rockets. Later it turned out they were just tank rounds.

"It's not unexpected they'd turn something up," Cole said.

After running so many missions over the last few months, the Iraqis are now essentially running operations on their own. For example, before a mission now the advisers give the unit's leadership a quick brief and the Iraqi sergeants and officers take care of briefing their men, said Sgt. Josh Abbatoeye, an adviser of Cole's team.

"They just react quick and execute the mission," Abbatoeye said. The company's mission for Lion's Pride II was pretty simple, he said. They would set up several blocking positions on the main dirt roads that ran through the search area.

"Pretty simple mission," Abbatoeye

said. "No one gets in, no one gets out."

And that's pretty much how it did turn out. With the exception of the company stopping a kidnapping, the whole morning went by quickly.

The ING at one blocking position stopped a car with four men and a young boy trying to leave the area, said Gelderman. The men were questioned and said they'd accidentally hit the boy while he rode his bike. They were just taking the boy to hospital. The ING then questioned the boy. He said they're kidnapping me. The four were men were detained and turned over to the 304th ING's higher headquarters, the 40th ING Brigade. It turns out the boy's father is an Iraqi police officer.

The mission was also a sign of how much progress the ING have made over the last few months. The ING went out and set up the blocking positions on their own. After a few minutes the advisers went out and checked on them. Checking up on them would have been impossible a few months ago.

"They had all the blocking positions set up and they were good to go," Abbatoeye said.



By Cpl. Bill Putnam, 122nd MPAD

Soldiers from the ING advisor team and Company A, 304th Iraqi National Guard Battalion work together to pull an ING truck out of a ditch. Part of the road the truck was parked on had collapsed and the truck's front tires fell in.



# Bowie Brigade

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## Guardsmen Reach 24-Month Service Cap

### Some Troops Prepare for Home, Others Choose to Stay in Iraq

By Staff Sgt. Rebekah-mae Bruns  
39th BCT Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Baghdad, Iraq -- The final round of Oregon National Guard Soldiers who have reached their 24-month service cap for high operation tempo days will return home from Iraq soon. A law enacted by congress shortly after 9-11 limits a national guard or reserve Soldier's active duty obligation to 24 months within a five-year time span. The law was established to help avoid the abuse of reserve forces.

The 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry sent home a total of 60 Soldiers of the 95 who qualified to return to the States. Thirty chose to stay in Iraq while another five were sent back for rehabilitation due to battle injuries.

Battalion commander Lt. Col. Daniel Hendrickson spoke to the Soldiers, during a recent awards ceremony, and explained that he respected their decisions to leave Iraq.

"You guys have paid your dues on the deployment and on previous deployments - that has earned you the right to go home," he said. "You all have families... and guys, fam-



By Staff Sgt. Rebekah-mae Bruns, 39th BCT Public Affairs

Lt. Col. Daniel Hendrickson (left), gives one of his Soldiers a final salute for his service in Iraq. Soldiers who reached their 24-month service cap were given 'end of tour' awards for their service during Operation Iraqi Freedom II. ilies come first, because they will be here after this career is over."

The Soldiers who qualified to return home served on the Sinai Peninsula as part of a Multinational Observer's Force that was

mobilized again eight months later for duty in Iraq to fill out the 2nd Battalion, which is headquartered in Cottage Grove, Ore.

Hendrickson said he wished Soldiers would stay because he didn't like breaking up a good team, but he understood their choices.

The Soldiers returning home have served and fought in some of Iraq's most tumultuous areas, including eastern Baghdad's Sadr City, Adhamiyah and Taji, a city located just 15 miles north of Iraq's capital. Other elements of the battalion have fought in Najaf and aided in Fallujah with the 1st Cavalry Division's 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment. The Battalion as a whole has lost nine Soldiers and seen 51 wounded in action.

"We've lost good men - they've been wounded and they've been killed but none of you quit. You did the right thing," said Hendrickson speaking to Soldiers. "I will savor every moment I have shared with you ...both bitter and sweet."

Soldiers returning home are expected to arrive in Fort Hood, Texas, within the week, where they will spend five days in a series of debriefings before returning to their families in Oregon.

The rest of the battalion will remain in Iraq to complete its scheduled one-year 'boots-on-the-ground' rotation.

## Ten Year Old's Vision Reaches Children in Iraq

By 1st Lt. Chris Heathscott  
39th BCT Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Baghdad, Iraq -- Stories of heroes are common in Iraq. The daily struggles of life in a combat zone have borne thousands. Our Servicemen and women usually dominate these stories, but one in particular involves a hero who doesn't wear a uniform at all, at least not a military uniform. This one is dressed to play soccer...and he's 10 years old.

Jared Jolton was home in Colorado, when the Soldiers with the 39th Brigade Combat Team's 3rd Battalion, 153rd Infantry, were lining up their convoy at Camp Taji, Iraq, for their day's mission on Dec. 11. Although physically on the other side of the world, it was Jared's vision that led to the mission to deliver a 5-ton truck full of soccer balls, clothing and equipment to some of the more needy children in Iraq.

"Jared has always been a kid who thought about how he could help others," said his mother, Jill



Jared Jolton

Jolton via e-mail. "Even when he was in pre-school we would drive past a corner where homeless people frequently solicited donations and he wanted to give them his sack lunch."

His dream to help the less fortunate children was sparked one day when he saw he had 10 pairs of soccer shoes and shin guards that he had outgrown.

"He remarked how lucky he was to be able to get new gear each season and wanted to re-distribute the gear to people who weren't so lucky," Jolton said. "While he first envisioned me and him driving back to the corner where the homeless people stand, he quickly did some math and the project grew. He figured that if all the families in his soccer club, the Colorado Rush, also had 10 pair of shoes laying around that he could quickly gather 10,000 pairs and get them to kids all around the world."

With his drive for donations a success, now the chore of getting the goods to their final destination was the next challenge. Colorado Springs resident, Sage Harper, got word of the issue and stepped in to help.

Harper, who with his six-man team, worked for ITT installing, operating, and maintaining more than 40 AT&T phone centers for the servicemen and women in the Iraq, called on ITT for help.

"The costs of getting the gear through the soccer club would have been huge so I told ITT of my situation and asked them if they'd be willing to assist in shipping the gear via FedEx to us," said Harper."

The... office gladly agreed to help out and the gear was shipped to Kuwait. Then we put the gear in the back of one of our new phone centers that happened to be heading to Taji."

With donations on the ground in Iraq, Harper now sought the assistance of the 39th Brigade Combat Team to take on the final phase of delivery to the children. He presented his request for assistance the brigade's civil affairs staff officer, and commander of the 403rd Civil Affairs Battalion, Maj. Michael Guiles, who was very willing to assist.

"As I started to find out the story about Jared the more motivated I was to do this," Guiles said.

Guiles presented the project to his battalion representatives, with the 3rd Battalion jumping on the opportunity to deliver the equipment to the children in their area of operations.

"Capt. Robbins was very proactive. I put it out on the table, and said if you guys want to get involved in this be quick about it," Guiles said. "[He] helped us put it all together and he could maneuver it, so that's why we went with them."

The most difficult portion of the project now behind them, Harper and the Soldiers were now loading up for the 'easy' part...a combat operation outside the wire to deliver the goods to the children of Husaniyah.

"At the first site, in the beginning, there was a little boy who must have only been a bit taller than my knee," said Harper. "He got up



By 1st Lt. Chris Heathscott, 39th BCT Public Affairs

Three 39th BCT Soldiers air up soccer balls for delivery.

to the front of the line and seemed to have a blank expression on his face as to why was he even there. He looked around till he finally glanced up into the back of the 5-ton as a soccer ball was being dropped."

"Once the soccer ball, cleats, socks, jersey, and shin guards were in his arms, he broke out with this great smile on his face," he said. "Seeing this little one just try to carry everything, while he was glowing as he was, would make anyone's heart melt. That totally made my day and there wasn't anything that could have brought me down."

With the 39th's multiple such missions overshadowed by the realities of an environment infested with insurgents driving a continued war to stop progress in Iraq, Harper now saw our efforts in a different light.

"I feel bad but I really didn't

know of much of this type of work being done," he said. "I've heard about several units adopting schools, etc...but never openly doing good things like this in a community. This was totally amazing and I'm sure that the unit makes a difference. Only time will tell."

While the smiles from the children provided a measure of effectiveness for the mission, the sight of our uniformed Soldiers handing over these gifts potentially marked them as heroes to these kids. Although many were involved to make this dream a reality, there was only one 'real' hero.

"Jared's one of my heroes," Guiles said. "I think that this is a great example that even today no matter how complex the world is, everybody stands a chance at making a difference in the world. Even at 10 years old you can affect the way that people live and you can change somebody's life. It's awe-

# Commandos

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## Medics Aid Iraqi Soldiers at the 'Alamo'

By Pfc. Matthew McLaughlin  
10th Mnt. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP AL-TAHREER, Baghdad, Iraq - A day at Forward Operations Base Hawk, nicknamed the "Alamo," is what moviegoers expect to see from a combat film. Character-developing dialog is cut short as Iraqi National Guardsmen and American Soldiers roll on and off the base ready for the next big mission. They even have a loveable pet, an Iraqi dog named "Clyde," for comic relief.

The only constant at the Alamo is that medics from 210th Forward Support Battalion are ready to treat soldiers from the 303rd Iraqi National Guard Battalion and their American support troops in the Commando Advisor Group from the 10th Mountain Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team (Commandos).

The medics would tell you the only constant at the Alamo is there are no constants.

"There is no such thing as a normal day over here," said Sgt. Michael Schwartz, 210th FSB. "One day we'll have seven patients, the next day we'll have none."

Just because they remain in the rear while ING and CAG Soldiers patrol the streets does not mean the medics don't see their share of action. The Alamo provides plenty of excitement, but it is not for the faint of heart, said 1st Lt. Erica Fiola, a physician's assistant with 210th FSB.

"We see it all out here," she said. "We love doing what we do."



By Pfc. Matthew McLaughlin, 10th Mnt. Div. Public Affairs  
Sgt. Robert Appel, Pfc. Brian McCourt, Pfc. Candon Boutin, 1st Lt. Erica Fiola and Pfc. Cody Nelson, 210th Forward Support Battalion, evacuate an injured Iraqi Nov. 20. Sand produced from the helicopter's propeller made visibility difficult for the medics.

"It's more intense, more real," said Pfc. Brian McCourt.

In their short tenure at the Alamo, 210th FSB medics have already treated mass casualties and called in several medical evacuations, mostly for ING troops.

On Nov. 20, they woke up in the early morning to several ING Soldiers seriously injured being brought in on stretchers. The medics quickly reacted and called in a heli-

copter to evacuate the injured. Fiola didn't even have time to put her boots on and helped carry the casualties to the helicopter in her slippers. Pfc. Jeremy Roberts said training, instincts and adrenaline got the medics through the day and, as a result, many ING troops will live to see another day.

"We woke up early in the morning," he said. "It was surreal, like it wasn't even happening."

## Commandos and ING Make a Stand at the 'Alamo'

By Pfc. Matthew McLaughlin  
10th Mnt. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP AL-TAHREER, Baghdad, Iraq - The spirit of the Alamo, synonymous with sacrifice and independence, is alive and well in Baghdad. Yet while Jim Bowie only had 186 Soldiers and his knife, this Alamo boasts an entire battalion of Iraqi National Guardsmen and American Soldiers advising them.

Forward Operations Base Hawk, dubbed "the Alamo" for its structural design, proxim-

ity to hostile forces and daily action and excitement, is the staging ground for the 303rd Iraqi National Guard Battalion. It is also the temporary home for the Commando Advisor Group, a group of 37 experienced Soldiers assembled from the 10th Mountain Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team (Commandos) to advise and support the Iraqi troops.

"We're responsible for training, mentoring and providing resources to the 303rd ING," said Maj. Ronnie Echelberger, CAG officer in charge. "They're the most well-

developed ING battalion in Baghdad."

Like the majority of CAG Soldiers, Echelberger volunteered to work with the 303rd ING. Soldiers were selected based on experience and availability. Echelberger, previously the chief of current operations for 2nd BCT, served as an advisor to the Afghanistan National Army prior to serving in Iraq.

"It was one of the most rewarding experiences in my military career," he said. "I jumped at the opportunity to do it here. This is one of the most important things we are doing in Iraq. We can have such a tremendous positive impact on an organization's ability to function and support themselves. It is the thing that will allow us to leave Baghdad in secure hands."

For now, an area of responsibility in Baghdad is in the 303rd ING Soldiers' hands. They still have a ways to go to be completely autonomous, but Staff Sgt. Joseph Hohmann, 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, said he's impressed with their progress.

"They're top notch," he said. "They can do their job. They're reliable and self-sufficient. They require very little supervision. As far as setting up (tactical control points) and searches, they are very proficient."

Soldiers from 303rd ING conduct the same operations American battalions do, with support from CAG Soldiers. They control their own area of operations in Baghdad like their American counterparts. They also conduct both independent operations as well as joint operations with multinational forces.

"We run patrols 24 hours (a day)," said the 303rd ING's battalion commander, who requested anonymity for security reasons. "We catch many insurgents and weapons ...

Soldiers from 210th FSB also occasionally help Iraqis in the local community. On one occasion, Fiola and Soldiers from the CAG treated two children in the neighboring town of Ameriya. The brother and sister, refugees from Fallujah, received shrapnel wounds when a mortar round intended for the Alamo hit the town instead.

The children were unable to seek medical assistance from the local Iraqi hospital because it was too expensive.

Soldiers from the Commando Advisor Group lent their support to the children. Fiola stitched up the children and said they will make a full recovery.

"This is one way to win the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people," she said. "It helps build trust between us. The family was very nice to me and very helpful. All and all, it was a good experience."

Treating an American Soldier can be difficult when time is of the essence. Treating a patient who doesn't speak the same language adds another layer of difficulty to the situation, Schwartz said.

"We can't talk freely to them because of the language barrier," he said. "They can't tell us what is wrong, so we have to figure it out."

All the medics from 210th FSB said their experiences at the Alamo have been worthwhile. They take pride in treating Americans and Iraqis alike.

"There is nothing better than saving someone's life," said Pfc. Candon Boutin. "It doesn't matter if they're American, Australian or Iraqi. We're all on the same side."

kill many bad guys."

Soldiers from 303rd ING also provide a politically pragmatic task of searching mosques, a taboo for multinational forces.

"(A) U.S. presence in mosques is a sensitive issue," Echelberger said. "They do lots of mosque searches, so U.S. personnel don't have to enter."

Soldiers from the 2nd BCT have only been supporting 303rd ING Soldiers for a few weeks, but Echelberger said he feels comfortable with his Iraqi comrades and feels both sides are quickly gaining each others trust with every patrol.

"You have to have trust in order to develop and work together," he said. "I'm very confident in their abilities. I'm not concerned about my safety with them."

Many ING soldiers feel the same. One soldier, known as "Lt. Mike" to his American allies, said he values the training and advice CAG Soldiers offer his Soldiers.

"They're nice guys," he said. "I'm learning a lot. Maj. Echelberger and Master Sgt. (Owen) Meehan (CAG non-commissioned officer in charge) help us a lot."

Meehan said he looks forward to helping them become a stronger unit. He is impressed with the progress they have made, especially in such a short period of time. Soldiers from 303rd ING were recruited last May and have already shown to be worthy allies.

"As a (master sergeant) I learn something new every day," Meehan said. "We're asking young kids to do it much sooner. This isn't something that will happen overnight. The ING has come a long way. The 303rd is the best ING battalion we have. They are proud to stand next to us, as we are them."



By Pfc. Matthew McLaughlin, 10th Mnt. Div. Public Affairs

Staff Sgt. Joseph Johansen, 2nd Brigade Combat Team (Commandos), speaks with Soldiers from the 303rd Iraqi National Guard Battalion Nov. 21. Johansen provides logistical support for the Commando Advisor Group, supporting the Iraqi battalion.



# Tiger Brigade

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## Kevlar Saves Louisiana Sergeant's Life

By Spc. Erin E. Robicheaux  
256th BCT Public Affairs

CAMP AL-TAHREER, Baghdad, Iraq - Spc. Daniel Chapman of Lake Charles, La. holds a kevlar helmet with the desert camouflage cover cut across the middle and runs his finger along where the bullet impacted the top of it.

Knowing that a Soldier's life could have been taken just a few nights before, he grinned.

"I'm relieved to know that this equipment really works," he said.

Three days earlier, Chapman was in his company's operations center when the call came in for a medical evacuation. A Soldier from his unit, Company B, 3rd Battalion, 156th Infantry Regiment, 256th Brigade Combat Team, had sustained a gunshot to the head by sniper fire. Chapman patiently waited for the identity of the Soldier to be made as the staff ran through their procedures. In what seemed like an eternity to him, though he didn't want to believe it, the feeling in the pit of his gut was confirmed.

The Soldier was his brother.

Staff Sgt. Chad Chapman has worn many hats in his ten-year Army career as a sniper, a squad leader, and now as the commander of a gun truck. His head gear is the reason he's still here today.

On a day that started out like any other, he and his crew were assisting the Iraqi National Guard (ING) in directing traffic after a fuel truck overturned in a curve. Things were going smoothly and all of a sudden Chapman felt as if he had been struck on the back of the head.

"I remember that it was loud because of the fuel trucks and all of the traffic," Chad said. "The next thing I knew, I felt something



By Spc. Erin Robicheaux, 256th BCT Public Affairs

Staff Sgt. Chad Chapman shows Brig. Gen. John Basilica, Jr. the evidence that military safety equipment saved his life. Without the protection of his kevlar helmet, Chapman may have died from an insurgent sniper's bullet.

and thought that I had been hit with a board or a large object."

Staff Sgt. Chapman said the last thing he could recall before losing consciousness was hearing a ricochet. When he came to, he could hear his fellow Soldiers calling in for a medical evacuation. He was awake long enough to realize that he'd been shot in the head by a sniper.

"I was unconscious for a little bit of the time, but I can remember one Soldier holding my neck," he said. "I can also remember the helicopter coming in because all of the dust tore up my face."

Chapman was in and out of consciousness for the next couple of days and doesn't

remember much before waking up in the hospital. For a while he fought nausea and dizziness, along with "a great big pain in the neck."

A computerized axial topography (CAT) scan showed that he had a contusion, minor swelling and bruising on his brain. He was kept in the hospital for monitoring and after a couple of days was released back to his unit.

As Chad was getting airlifted to the hospital, Daniel was back in the rear waiting to hear the status of his brother's life.

"I got chills when I heard his battle roster number," said the younger Chapman. "I knew that I couldn't start to freak out because people were trying to work and help my

brother."

He said that he just stayed very quiet and tried his best to stay out of the way.

"Of course I wanted to jump in and do everything that I could, but I understood that everyone was assigned to a certain job, and chances were that they knew their job better than I did."

A few hours later, Daniel received the phone call that let him know that his brother would be okay. He then called his mom and dad to tell them the story. Their parents sounded okay to him, but couldn't contain their relief and excitement when they actually heard Chad's voice two days later.

"My mom was so thrilled when I called that she dropped the phone," Chad said.

Each brother is counting his blessings that the eldest seemed to have dodged the bullet this time. If you ask Chad, though, it was all about the safety equipment.

"It brought situational awareness to the forefront and reminded me that I always need to be on my toes," the elder Chapman brother said.

Chad said he knows most Soldiers feel like bad things won't happen to them, but he is living proof that it can ... and will.

"Even out on missions sometimes, I took off my protection next to the vehicle for just a little break, but there won't be any more of that now," Chad said.

It has also shown both brothers they should always be aware of their surroundings and pay attention to the details.

"I've been trying to remember everyone that I came into contact with that day, and what their demeanor was like," Chad said.

He remembered not long before the incident, he had to yell at three guys in a car because they wouldn't follow his instructions.

"To this day," Chad said, "I wonder if one of them may have been the sniper."

## NYC Firefighter, Three Others Find Final Glory in Baghdad

By Spc. Erin Robicheaux  
256th BCT Public Affairs

CAMP AL-TAHREER, Baghdad, Iraq -- Some may say Sgt. Christian Engeldrum had the most significant job following the attacks of September 11, 2001. In the famous picture of New York City firemen hanging a United States flag on a pole rising from the rubble, Engeldrum was the burly man holding the ladder.

He was steadying the way for his colleagues of Ladder 61, Co-op City, to follow him to the gates of freedom. Four years later, Sgt. Engeldrum once again led the way, this time for three of his fellow Soldiers.

Only this time, he's holding the ladder to the gates of heaven.

In less than a week, the 256th Brigade Combat Team has said good-bye to four honorable veterans: Sgt. Christian Engeldrum, Spc. Wilfredo Urbina, Spc. David Fisher, and Staff Sgt. Henry Irizarry.

Sgt. Christian Engeldrum was loved by everyone who crossed his path. He was a loving father and devoted husband. As a firefighter, he lived for life in Ladder 61, Co-op City. He was a key player in the recovery of New York City follow-

ing the terrorist attacks and believed in the cause so deeply, that he took the fight to Iraq.

Engeldrum was very mission-oriented and a constant positive source for his company and his platoon. No matter what challenges faced him and his troops he surged onward and refused to quit until the task was complete. He kept those around him calm and level headed and cooled the occasional hot tempers by the mere soothing calm of his presence. Though his sense of humor has been described by some as a little stale, his friends get a good laugh when they recount that the huge man's favorite movie was "Clueless."

Engeldrum remains immensely loved by his fellow Soldiers. Staff Sgt. Mike Brown, a close friend of thirteen years, says that he and the rest of the Soldiers of Company A, 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment, will have a long year ahead of them without their beloved buddy.

"The hardest part is that there's nothing that you can do," Brown said. "We don't even know who to get angry at. Do you get angry at the insurgents? Do you get angry at the civilians because they know what's going on, but won't talk



By Sgt. Thomas Benoit, 256th BCT Public Affairs

Soldiers of the 256th Brigade Combat Team honor four fallen Soldiers during a memorial service recently. The Soldiers all died within a week of each other and were New York natives.

because they're scared? You get mad because it doesn't feel like it's worth your buddy's life."

Spc. Wilfredo Urbina was one in a million to his friends of 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment. He was truly excited to be serving in this war as an infantryman.

To bring to light the kind of person that he was, when he learned

that a close friend, Spc. Nicholas Wilson, could not be eligible for the Combat Infantry Badge (CIB) due to the fact that he was an engineer, he told him, "I will get that award for you."

Urbina had goals and wanted to make the Army a permanent occupation. He wanted to be a leader and he took all tasks with the

notion that every noncommissioned officer was watching him. Urbina not only wanted himself to look good, but what others thought of his team, his squad and his platoon also made a difference to him. His courageous behavior fueled his ambitions on succeeding in today's Army.

**See Fallen, page 15.**



## Lancers Go Head-to-Head During 'Banner Day' Events

By Spc. Jan Critchfield  
122nd MPAD

CAMP AL-AMAL, Baghdad, Iraq -- 1st Cavalry Division Soldiers of Task Force Lancer took a day for friendly competition Dec. 5 as a break from patrolling what are some of the most unforgiving streets Baghdad has had to offer since the First Team arrived here in February.

"We're having what we call our 'Banner Day'," said Lt. Col. Gary Volesky, commander of 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team. "It's a sporting day for all the elements of [Task Force 2-5]. It's a day for friendly competition for a banner that goes to whoever wins the most events. We do it to build a little camaraderie ... a time to just enjoy oneself for the day."

With each company competing for bragging rights and a ribbon to hang from their guidon in soccer, football, basketball, horseshoes, relay race and tug-of-war competitions, the number one spot was hotly contested.

One thing that wasn't hot, however, was the weather. Usually Banner Day takes place at their home in Fort Hood,

Texas.

"We do this every six months back at garrison (Fort Hood)," Volesky said. "We were going to do it in the summer but the weather was real different, so we said, 'Hey, let's do banner day.'"

"We decided to take a day for some friendly competition amongst the companies," Command Sgt. Maj. Fernando Rodriguez, Command Sgt. Maj. of Task Force 2-5 said. "We haven't been able to do it so far because of the weather ... and also because of all the fighting we've been doing. The mission hasn't allowed us to do it."

By far the most dangerous area of Baghdad, the area of operations that Task Force Lancer is responsible had been a focus of fighting until the Mahdi Militia agreed to disband in October.

"What we wanted to do was have a day in which we could involve everybody with the different events that we wanted to do," Rodriguez said. "It's a chance for the guys to come together from the different companies, who normally operate independently. The companies get to come together as a company and the battalion as well. ... This boosts my own morale."

I don't get to see the guys together like this very much. We get together for award ceremonies and memorial services, and those are really the only times. It's been a good day."

(Right) Soldiers of Task Force Lancer play football during Banner Day, a day of competition and relaxation for Soldiers of Task Force Lancer.



Photos by Spc. Jan Critchfield, 122nd MPAD



Soldiers of Task Force Lancer pull with all their might during the tug-of-war competition on Banner Day, a day of competition and relaxation for Soldiers of Task Force Lancer.



Lt. Col. Gary Volesky (left) and Command Sgt. Maj. Fernando Rodriguez, the commander and Command Sgt. Maj. of 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, attach the ribbon that shows that Company A, won the daylong competition.



A Soldier of Task Force 2-5 "Lancer" sprints off after his company's guidon was passed to him during the guidon relay event during Banner Day, a day of competition and relaxation for Soldiers of Task Force Lancer.



# In Remembrance

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## Rooms Serve as Reminder of Heroes

From *Dedication*, page 7.

to two fallen pilots, it was an honoring of brothers.

"Those guys were my friends," he said. "I had served with Mr. Colton in Korea with 1-2 Aviation and Mr. Fortenberry was my maintenance pilot here. When you serve together, you form bonds, like family. I feel like I lost two of my brothers that day, their memory will always be with me. To be honored like this is a pretty special occasion."

On the ground that April day was Sgt. Maj. James Ross of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team. Ross detailed the heroic actions of Fortenberry and Colton in a letter prepared for the ceremony.

"Sir, I wanted you to know from someone that was on the ground that day what a heroic job your pilots did. We were heavily engaged by 20 or so insurgents and were getting down to the last of our ammunition. We knew that without air support we would not be able to secure the convoy and evacuate the wounded. When we called in for air and

those Apaches showed up about 15 minutes later, every trooper in my unit cheered as they enabled us to get to a safe location and we watched in horrified silence when the Apache was shot down. Thank you for all that you and your pilots do in support of the troops on the ground."

"Chuck and Shane, we haven't forgotten the example you set," Lewis said. "We haven't forgotten your sacrifices. Every accolade that comes from a ground unit commending my air cavalrymen of their support, bravery or dedication reminds me of you."

Brigade Commander Col. James McConville assisted Lewis in cutting the yellow ribbon in front each door, officially opening the Colton and Fortenberry rooms.

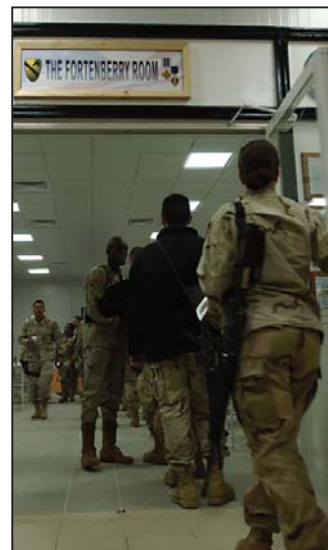
"When you return home, people are going to ask you what you did during the global war on terrorism and what you did in Iraq. I want you to push your chest out proudly and tell them that you served in the 1st Cavalry Division, in the Warrior Brigade, in First Attack (TF 1-227). You tell them that you had the

honor and privilege of serving with two great American heroes, who we honor today. You tell them about their heroic actions on Easter Sunday, 11 April 2004. How Shane and Chuck responded without delay to a distress call from their brothers on the ground."

As McConville solemnly walked away from the podium, the ceremony was brought to a conclusion as guests were invited to take a tour of the new rooms joining troopers in a reception.

An emotionally wrought Lewis shook hands with Soldiers as he thanked them for coming to the day's ceremony, the loss of his troopers still deeply affecting the commander.

"We wanted to leave something permanent here, so that the next unit will be guided by Chuck and Shane's memory, will know what it takes, what it means to be counted on," he said. "It is my sincere hope that Inge, Jennifer and Lance Colton and Cynthia, Benjamin, Alexander and Nicholas Fortenberry will have an idea of how proud every single trooper in this room is of their husbands and fathers."



By Cpl. Benjamin Cossel, 122nd MPAD  
The Colton room and the Fortenberry room in the Camp Taji dining facility #1 were dedicated in the memory of two pilots, Warrant Officers Shane Colton and Chuck Fortenberry during a ceremony Dec. 15.

## Fallen Tigers Honored During 256th BCT Ceremony

From *Fallen*, page 13.

According to friends, Engeldrum and Urbina were closer than any two Soldiers in Company A's 2nd squad. Engeldrum was a person who demanded perfection. He loved to look good. Urbina loved to look good in front of Engeldrum and this only made him stronger and their relationship more cohesive. It is believed by their fellow Soldiers that Urbina devoted himself to every task partly because he wanted Sgt. "Drum" to be proud of him, and that made him a vast asset to the 1-69th team.

An asset to D Troop, 101st Cavalry, Spc. David Fisher was born on June 12, 1983 in Albany New York. He was a very proud older brother and referred to his 11 year old sister, Andrea as his princess. Danny, his little brother, was the spitting image of his elder sibling and looked up to him very much.

Fisher came from a very close family to include his parents, grandparents, and his girlfriend of one year, Tara. His father was a police officer and after returning home from the deployment to Iraq, Fisher had plans to attend the police academy and follow in his dad's footsteps.

His best friend, Spc. Christopher Holland, has been an inseparable part of his life since the first grade, so much so that they came across the world together to defend the United States in the war on terrorism.

On Tuesday, September 11, 2001, both Soldiers were in school at Hudson Valley Community College in Albany, New York.

When the attacks happened just two hours away from their front doors, they went home together to watch the coverage on television. Only three weeks earlier, the best friends had discussed getting out of school to do something different. When the terrorists struck the World Trade Center, the military seemed like the perfect answer. Two months later they were officially tankers in the New York National Guard and were attending basic training at Fort Knox, Kentucky.

Holland recalled an incident that happened shortly after returning home.

**"The mood of the battalion is much more dangerous. Their anger is channeled, and they are more focused than ever on what they do."**

-Lt. Col. Geoffrey Slack

"For one of our first drills we went down to New Jersey and they had brand new M1A2 tanks," Holland remembered. "They let us drive them and when Dave was parking it, he clipped the side of the brand new tank on the side of the brand new garage. It couldn't have happened to a more perfect person."

Holland explained that Fisher was the kind of person who would have a friend everywhere he went. He was always the center of attention but he never intended for it to be that way. It was just the kind of personality he had. According to him, Fisher was quiet around a big group of strangers, but if he was in

a room with four or five friends he lit up the room.

Fisher was a jokester and loved to play pranks when no one was expecting them. During the 'Y2K' New Year's Eve, he snuck out of the room as the countdown was happening, and at the stroke of midnight he turned all of the lights in the house off. Moments later, the lights in the house came back up and he walked into the living room with a big grin on his face.

Holland also recalls that his buddy was very athletic and competitive. He said Fisher was also a leader.

"Dave was the organizer of our flag football team but his passion was basketball," recalled Holland. "If he would have played in high school, he would have probably earned a scholarship."

Staff Sgt. Henry Irizarry was looked to by his fellow Soldiers for his leadership, guidance, his sense of humor, and his ability to emit a positive light into any situation, regardless of the circumstances. He was a loving father, grandfather, and a devoted husband. Those who served with him deem him as a devoted Soldier whose willing service to his country speaks for itself.

"Izzy" will be remembered by those who knew him for his friendly smile, his calm presence, and his kind demeanor. Though he was widely known for his sense of humor, Irizarry was a mission-oriented Soldier who was always ready and willing when duty called.

In the wake of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, he served with the Fighting 69th at Ground Zero. He further demonstrated his patriotism and allegiance

to the unit by volunteering for duty with the 1/69th for Operation Noble Eagle at the U.S. Military Academy.

When the Fighting 69th was called upon in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, once again, Izzy was there. He deployed in the difficult capacity as a section leader in the Scout Platoon. He was chosen for this position due to his proven competence and courage. There was never any doubt that he was completely devoted to the success of the unit and that he would give everything he had in order to ensure the success of the Soldiers in this squad.

Lt. Col. Geoffrey Slack, commander of the 1-69, isn't surprised with the impact that the four Soldiers have made on the rest of the Fighting 69th.

"It hurts them immensely, especially since they all knew each other so well," he said.

Slack also said that the brigade chaplain and a few mental health professionals have come to the aid of his Soldiers, helping them through this difficult time with their services.

The fact that the terrorist attacks happened to New Yorkers more than any other collective group of Americans is compounded by the tragedy that, to date, the deaths in the 256th BCT have all been Soldiers from New York. Slack said this fuels a fire within his Soldiers that is beyond compare.

"The mood of the battalion is much more dangerous," he said. "Their anger is channeled, and they are more focused than ever on what they do."

Three years ago the United States was shown that, in an instant, the world can be turned upside

down. In early December, four Soldiers, their families, and all 3,900 members of the 256th Tiger Brigade are still being shown daily that everything can change...in a New York minute.

### Our Fallen Troops

Staff Sgt. Henry Irizarry

Sgt. Michael Boatright

Cpt. Mark Stubenhofer

Pfc. Robert Hoyt

Staff Sgt. Christian Engeldrum

Pfc. Wilfredo Urbina

Spc. David Fisher

To all of our fallen troopers; you are gone but not forgotten. We will continue the fight.



## The Best Alternative Holiday Movies *Ever* (IMHO)

Long before the day actually arrives, I become fairly sick of "Christmas Movies" (with a few notable exceptions), filled with spirited messages and frilly holiday cheer. If you're in the same boat as me before, after or around the time TNT begins its seventeenth "It's a Wonderful Life" marathon, then here's five alternate Christmas movies I recommend and why.

**Bad Santa** - Billy Bob Thornton gives the performance of his career as a foul-mouthed, alcoholic, womanizing, thieving Santa Claus. If that description alone doesn't float your boat, skip to the next movie. Of course, Billy Bob doesn't play the real Santa Claus here, he just plays one of those old guys that must endure the thousands of whiney, spoiled kids whose parents force them to get a picture with Ol' Saint Nick at the local mall. The only reason this curmudgeon chooses to be Santa Claus year after year however, is because it enables he and his sidekick/elf to scope out the mall's security before robbing it blind. Along the way there is much drinking, swearing, and vomiting.

This is a movie that is both cheerfully offensive, absolutely hilarious, and a perfect antithesis to the "Holiday Spirit."

**Die Hard** - There are only two things that this bombastic action-movie classic has to do with Christmas: the 80s rap renditions of Christmas songs on its soundtrack and the fact that the movie takes place on Christmas Eve. But so what? Any excuse for watching Bruce Willis whoop-up on the Euro-trash terrorists who crash the Christmas party at his wife's office is a good enough excuse for me.

**Gremlins** - There are only two rules given to Zach when he gets a mysterious but cuddly little creature called a "Mogwai" for Christmas: 1) Don't feed it after midnight; 2) Don't get it wet. As in all movies, rules are meant to be broken. But that's okay, because if these two simple rules weren't broken, then we would never have had the chance to see a couple of these cute, cuddly little fur balls become a horde of chaos-creating reptiles. And that would be a shame because when these little rascals are unleashed on the

### LeDrew's Reviews

Sp. Erik LeDrew

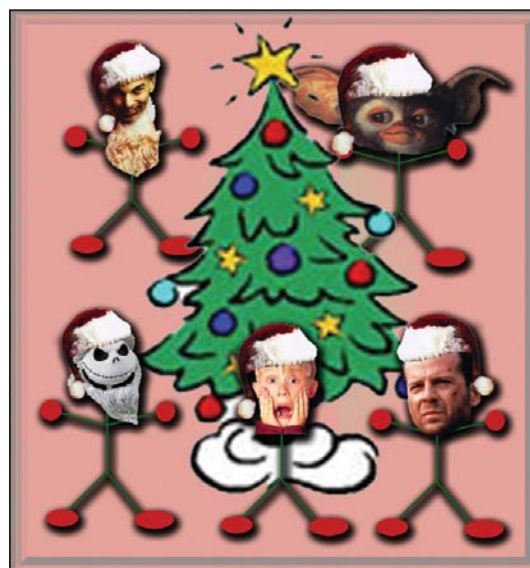
Movie Critic



movie's quiet suburban town, the mischief and mayhem that ensues is a pure comic delight.

**Home Alone** - Sure it's kind of a kids' movie, but after more than a decade since Maculay Culkin first showed-up "The Wet Bandits" (would-be robbers Joe Pesci and Daniel Stern), the pure slapstick silliness of it all is still great fun.

**A Nightmare Before Christmas** - This is really the only movie on this list that is actually a "Christmas Movie," but because it involves "Halloween Town" (instead of "Christmas Town") trying to make a heartfelt attempt at bringing Christmas to the rest of the world, it's usually either lumped in with Halloween movies or, sadly, just altogether misunderstood. If you haven't seen it, don't let the monsters and Claymation



Graphic by Spc. Marie Whitney, 122nd MPAD

discourage you, this is a truly great movie and worthy of being watched anytime of the year; but especially Christmas-time.

And there you have it. All of these movies aren't for everybody, but I like them all and not a single

one of these is quite the same as another, which to my mind equals blissful relief from the smothering, corn-syrupy sweetness of all those annoying Hallmark Christmas specials. Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!

## Camp Liberty Beats Camp Victory in Flag Football Game

By Spc. Erik LeDrew  
122nd MPAD

CAMP AL-TAHREER, Baghdad, Iraq -- The Camp Liberty "Silver Eagles" defeated the Camp Victory "Dirty South" in a flag-football game Dec. 5 at the Camp Liberty Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) Center beating them with a final score of 45-25.

The Silver Eagles, comprised mainly of 1st Cavalry Division Soldiers, wore tan shirts to denote their players. The Dirty South were a III Corps-based team, made up of a combination of Soldiers, Airmen and Marines all clad in standard gray physical training shirts and black shorts.

The game between these two rivals kicked-off at 2 p.m. and within the first few minutes, the Silver Eagles had already scored their first touchdown thanks to the quick footwork of Sgt. Stanley Dockerty of the 15th Finance Support Battalion.

The ball was quickly turned-over after an incomplete fourth-down pass by Dirty South's quarterback Sgt. Tyrone Wilson.

Dockerty scored another touchdown for Liberty after a perfect pass from quarterback Master Sgt. Horace Collier at the end of the first quarter, making the score 14-0.

In the second quarter, Victory signal-caller Wilson managed to connect a

pass into the end-zone on his third attempt to Sgt. 1st Class Tyrone Taylor, giving the Dirty South their first touchdown, bringing them back into the game, 14-7.

The two teams remained in a stalemate until the end of the half, when Liberty connected on their third touchdown, a fourth down effort from Collier to Staff Sgt. Frank Wooten.

Liberty forced another quick turnover, and went back to work on offense. A short pass to Dockerty gave Liberty its fourth touchdown with five seconds left in the half, making the score 28-7.

In the last five seconds of the first half, Liberty's defense again conquered Victory's weak offense by forcing another turnover.

The two teams went into the second half of the football game with Liberty ahead by 21 points and the ball in their possession.

Collier threw a pass to Dockerty, who easily outplayed Victory's defenses, dashing into the end zone to score his fourth touchdown of the game, further solidifying Liberty's dominance of the game with a score of 35-7.

Perhaps resting on their laurels, the Silver Eagles' aggression waned in the fourth quarter, allowing the Dirty South to make several touchdowns, two by Wilson and a third by Taylor, who managed to rush the lax Liberty defense and squeeze through into the end zone.

Liberty's Wooten was able to score one final touchdown for his team in the last 1:30.

After some penalty points were awarded to the Silver Eagles, they managed to defeat the Dirty South by a comfortable 20-point margin.

"It was a very competitive game, but we have a lot of talent on our team," Collier said. "It was finesse that gave us the edge, though."



Camp Liberty Silver Eagles player Staff Sgt. Frank E. Wooten, of the 15th Finance Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, outruns a Camp Victory Dirty South player in a flag-football match held between the two rival teams Dec. 5.



Photos by Spc. Erik LeDrew, 122nd MPAD

The Camp Liberty "Silver Eagles" and Camp Victory "Dirty South" teams stand next to their respective final scores following the football game.